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ABSTRACT

This assessment of placement test scores in reading, math, and sentence skills from incoming students at College of the Desert (California) shows that students are overwhelmingly underprepared for study at the college. Only 15% of students were prepared in sentence skills, 27% in reading skills, 7% in math skills; only 3% were prepared in all 3 modules. The majority of students placed into mid-level English classes, and most students were prepared for mid- and high-level reading classes, yet 38% of students placed into the lowest-level math classes. Males and females scored similarly in sentence and reading skills, but fewer males placed into the lowest-level math classes (31% versus 44%). White students placed into higher-level English and reading classes than African-American, Asian, and Hispanic students, and Asian students placed into higher-level math courses. African-American and Hispanic students scored very low on the math assessment, with 63% of African Americans and 48% of Hispanics placing into classes below level one. The majority of students from all high schools placed into mid-level English classes, and all but two schools prepared students for higher-level reading classes. However, all but one school failed in preparing most students for anything but the lowest-level math classes. (Contains 13 graphs.) (CB)

Assessment Test Scores **of Incoming Students** **Fall 2001**

Maggie Negron and Matthew Breindel

COLLEGE OF THE DESERT

Assessment Services
43-500 Monterey Avenue
Palm Desert, California 92260

May 2002

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Assessment Test Scores of Incoming Students Fall 2001



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ASSESSMENT TESTING

Assessment testing is used at the College of the Desert to help counselors and faculty advisors identify in which English, Reading and/or Mathematics courses students should begin their college program of study. Also, the results are used to determine if a student meets any English, Reading or Mathematics prerequisites. Assessment scores are not used in the admission process and there is no minimum score that must be achieved. It is not possible to "fail" the assessment tests.

Assessment testing is expected of all students who:

1. Plan to complete an associate degree or certificate of achievement, and/or plan to transfer to a four-year college/university.
2. Plan to enroll in reading, writing and/or mathematics courses.
3. Plan to enroll in a course that has a reading, writing and/or mathematics prerequisite.

Students who have completed required competency courses with grades of C or higher at another accredited college/university are exempt from this requirement, providing official transcripts showing such completion are on file at College of the Desert.

In general, assessment testing is administered on an appointment basis in the Academic Skills Center (building E, room 6). Students can call 776-7413 or come in person to the ASC to schedule an appointment. Prior to taking the test, students need to complete and submit an application for admission.

The Computerized Placement Test (CPT) is accessed on-line through the Accuplacer website and assesses students in three skill areas: reading, writing and mathematics. The assessment instrument is not timed; students may take the test at their own pace. Most students complete the test in one and a half to two hours. Scores and placement results are immediately available when the test is complete. Students are told to keep the printed results and bring them when attending Orientation or when meeting with a counselor/advisor before registering for the semester.

There are five test modules (profiles): Reading Skills, Sentence Skills, Arithmetic, Elementary Algebra and College Level Math. All students take the Reading Skills, Sentence Skills and Arithmetic tests. Students who perform at a certain level of proficiency in the Arithmetic portion continue with the Elementary Algebra test. Students who perform at a

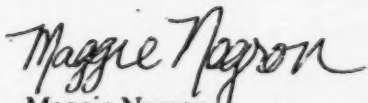
certain level of proficiency in the Elementary Algebra portion continue with the College Level Math test.

The CPT is a multiple-choice test using an adaptive testing procedure. Adaptive testing means that the sequence of test questions and the questions themselves will vary from student to student. The next question administered to an examinee is automatically chosen to yield the most information about the examinee based on the skill level indicated by answers to all the prior questions. Each test module begins with a question of moderate difficulty randomly selected by the computer from a pool of test questions. Subsequent questions are selected from relatively easier questions or more difficult questions based on how each individual responds on a previous question. The result of adaptive testing is that it is automatically customized around each individual student.

Because students are tested at their individual ability levels, each student is likely to encounter a different test. This eliminates problems of students exchanging information about answers either before or during the test.

The resulting scores of the tests fall into ranges that will suggest a course placement for the student in Reading, English and Mathematics. A grid displaying the placement ranges is printed in the front portion of the Schedule of Classes (see attached).

The Assessment Office is located in the Academic Skills Center, Building E, room 6. The Assessment Services Specialist reports to Chris Nelson, the Coordinator of the Academic Skills Center (supervisor) and Alma Beeuwsaert, the Chief Matriculation Officer. The Assessment Services Office and can be contacted at 776-7413 or at mnegron@collegeofthedesert.edu

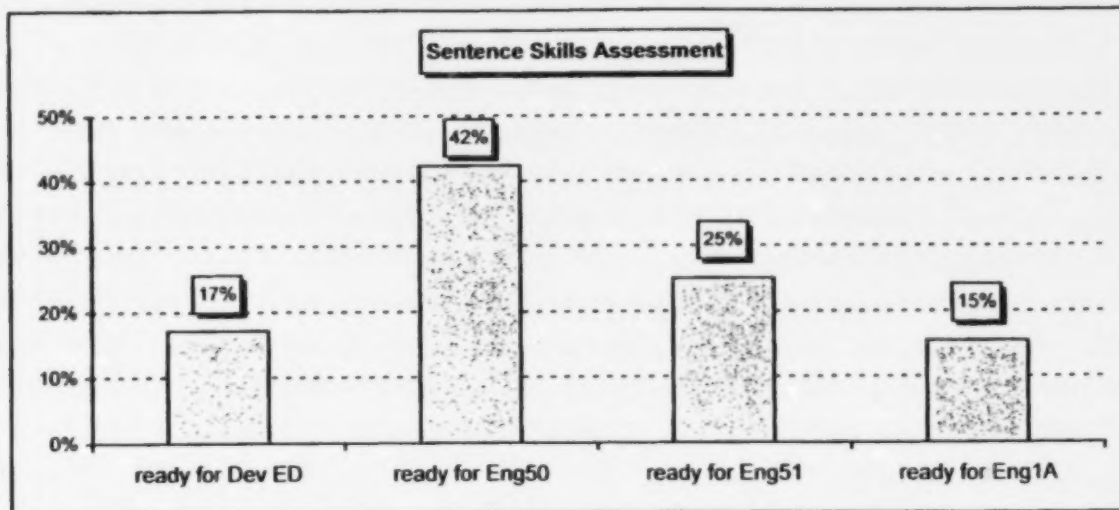

Maggie Negron

Assessment Services Specialist

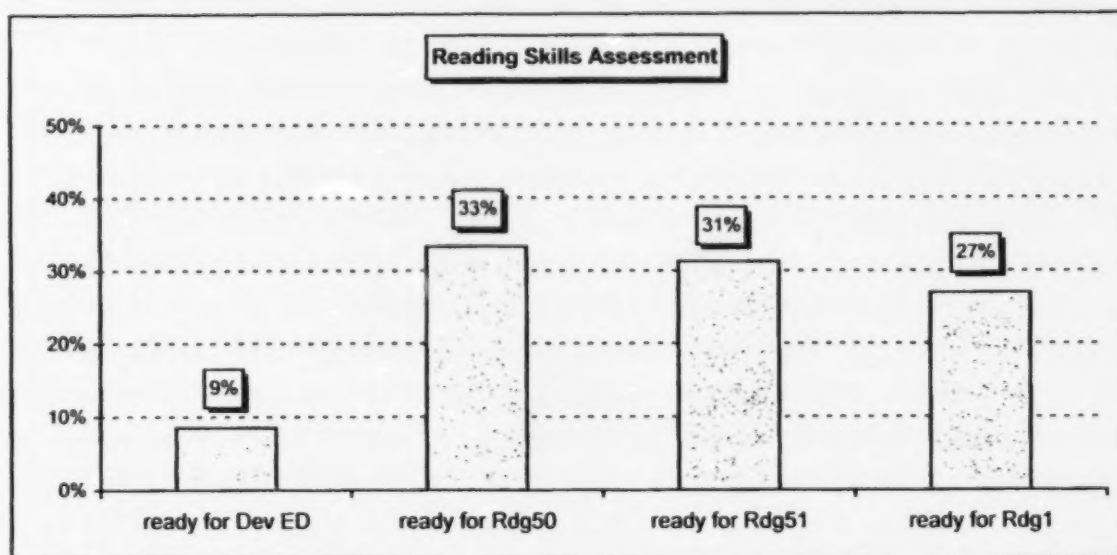
ASSESSMENT TESTING

INCOMING STUDENTS, FALL 2001

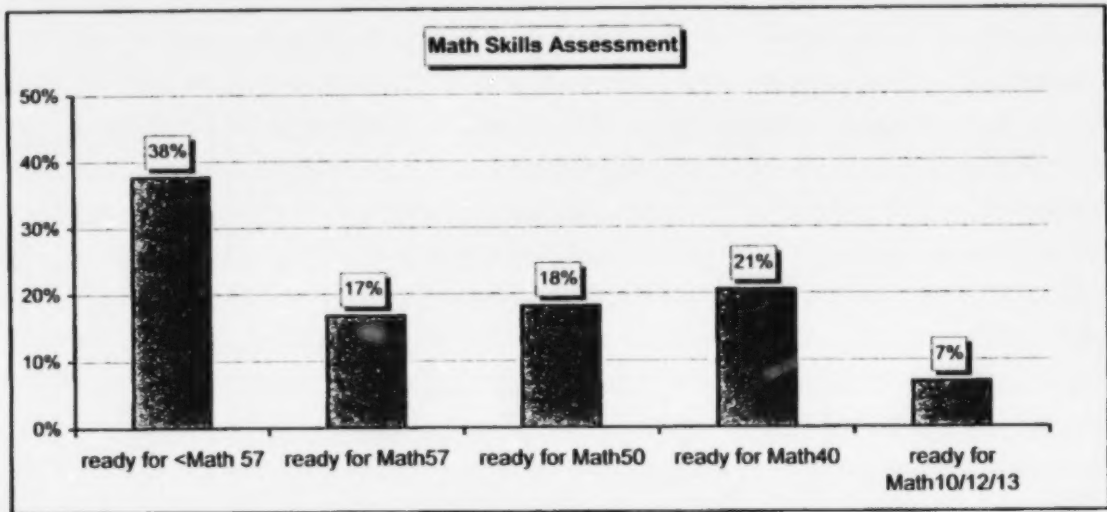
- Sentence Skills Assessment
- Reading Skills Assessment
- Math Skills Assessment
- Summary of Preparedness



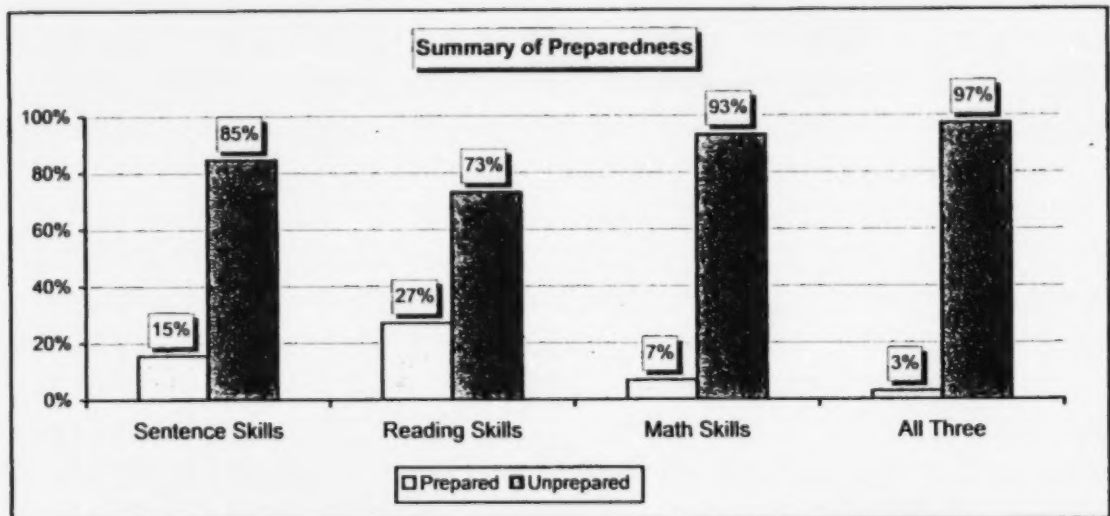
	ready for Dev ED	ready for Eng50	ready for Eng51	ready for Eng1A
Number	237	586	347	214
Percent	17%	42%	25%	15%



	ready for Dev ED	ready for Rdg50	ready for Rdg51	ready for Rdg1
Number	118	461	432	373
Percent	9%	33%	31%	27%



	ready for <Math 57	ready for Math57	ready for Math50	ready for Math40	ready for Math10/12/13
Number	521	232	252	284	94
Percent	38%	17%	18%	21%	7%

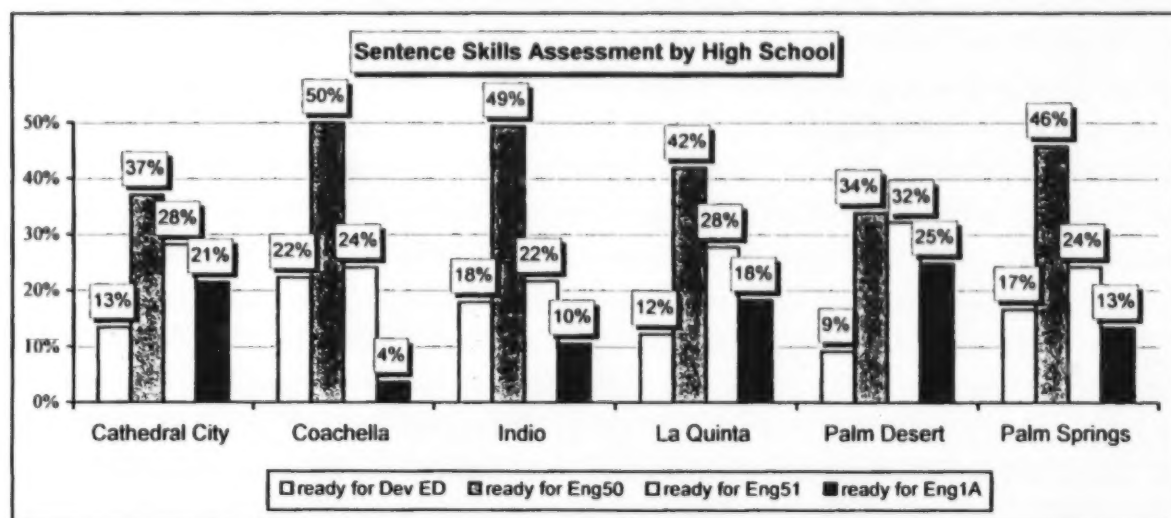
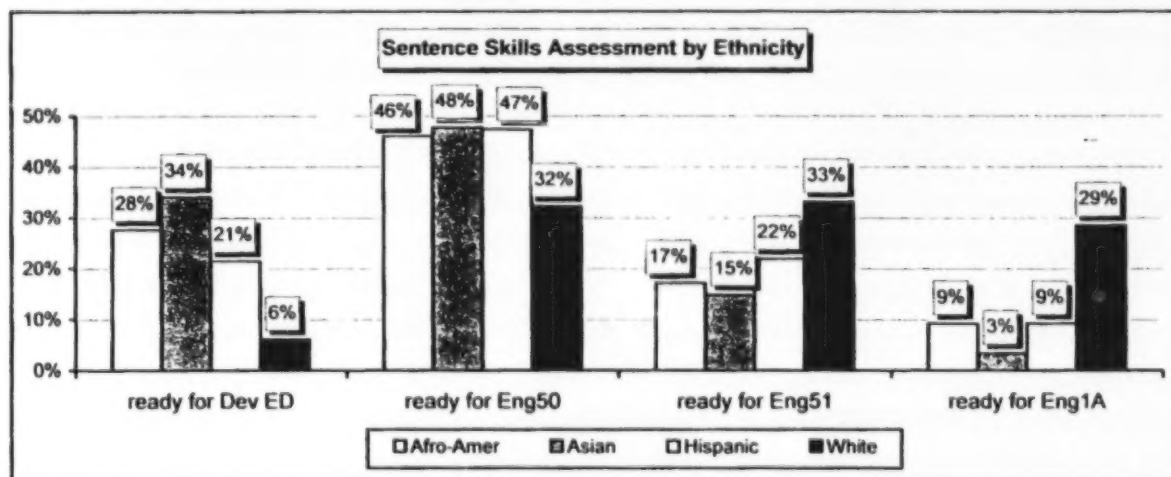
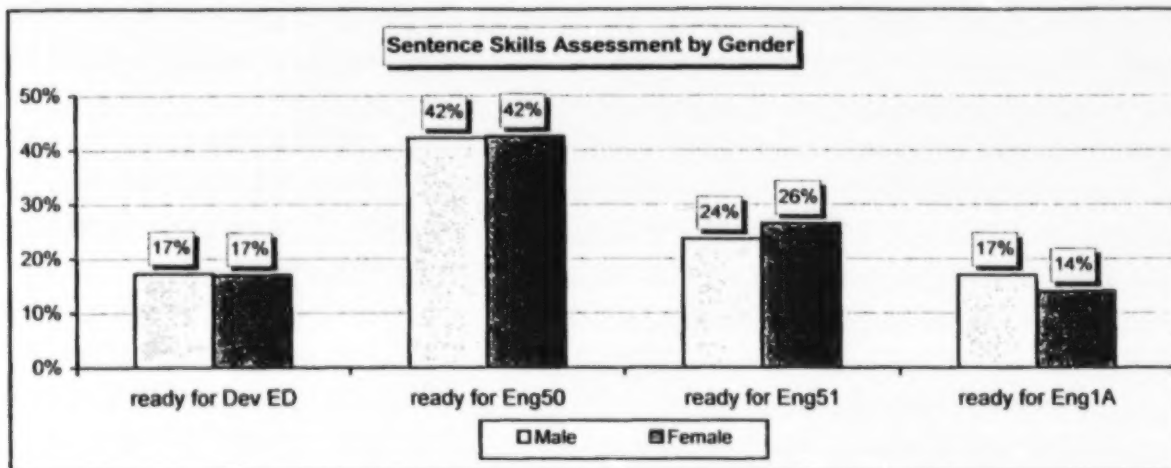


	Sentence Skills	Reading Skills	Math Skills	All Three
Prepared	214	373	94	40
Unprepared	1170	1011	1289	1343
Prepared	15%	27%	7%	3%
Unprepared	85%	73%	93%	97%

SENTENCE SKILLS ASSESSMENT

INCOMING STUDENTS, FALL 2001

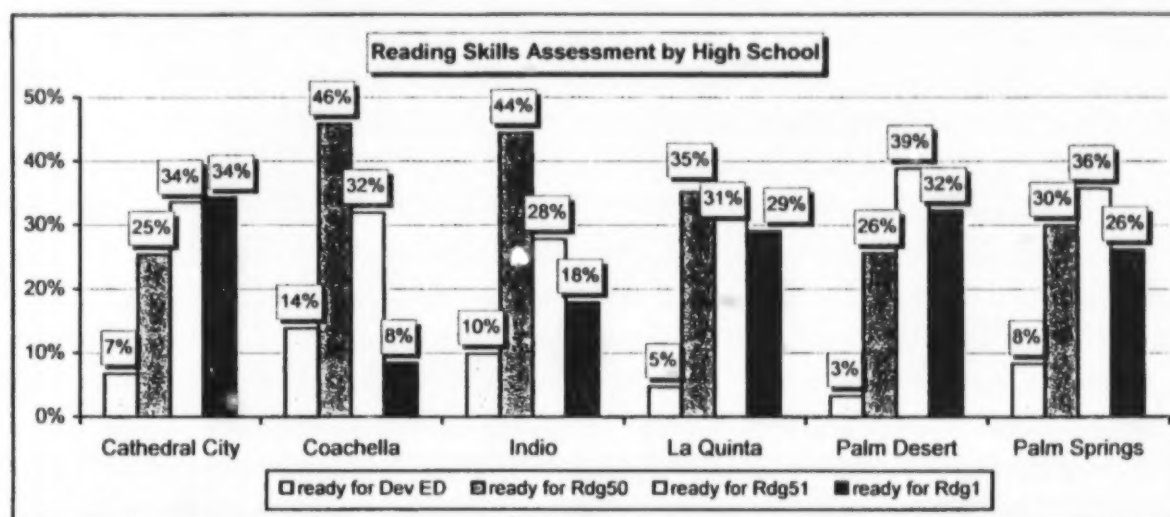
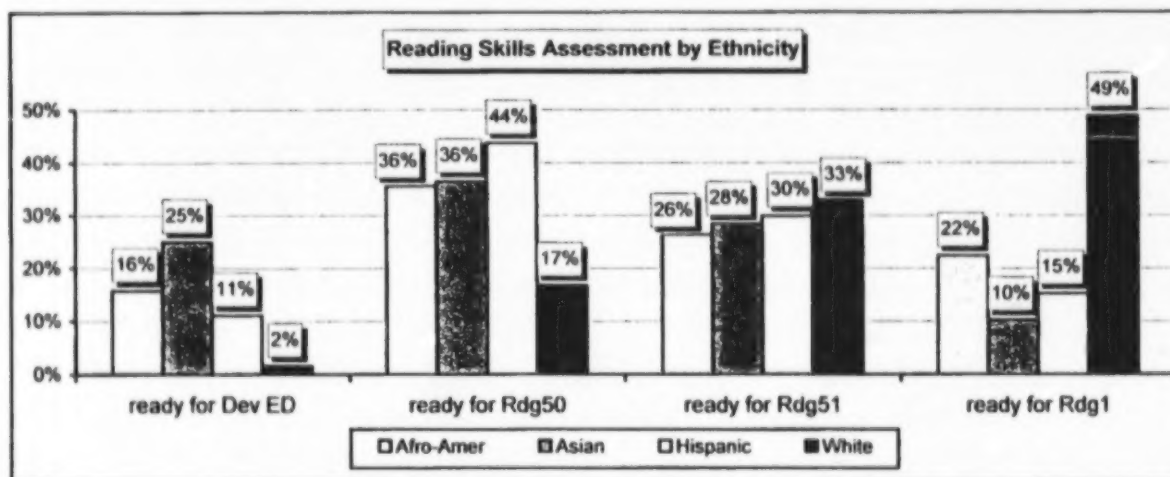
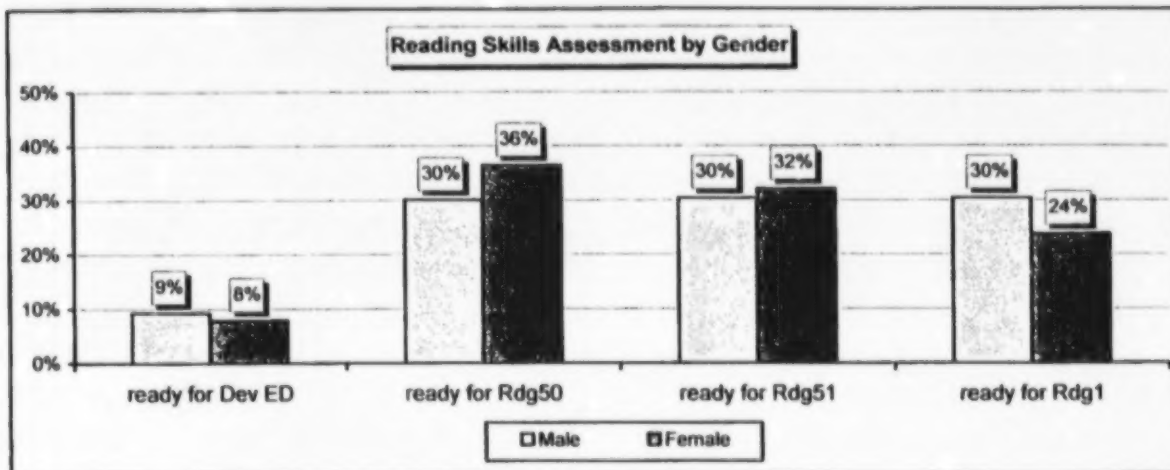
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- By Ethnicity
- By High School



READING SKILLS ASSESSMENT

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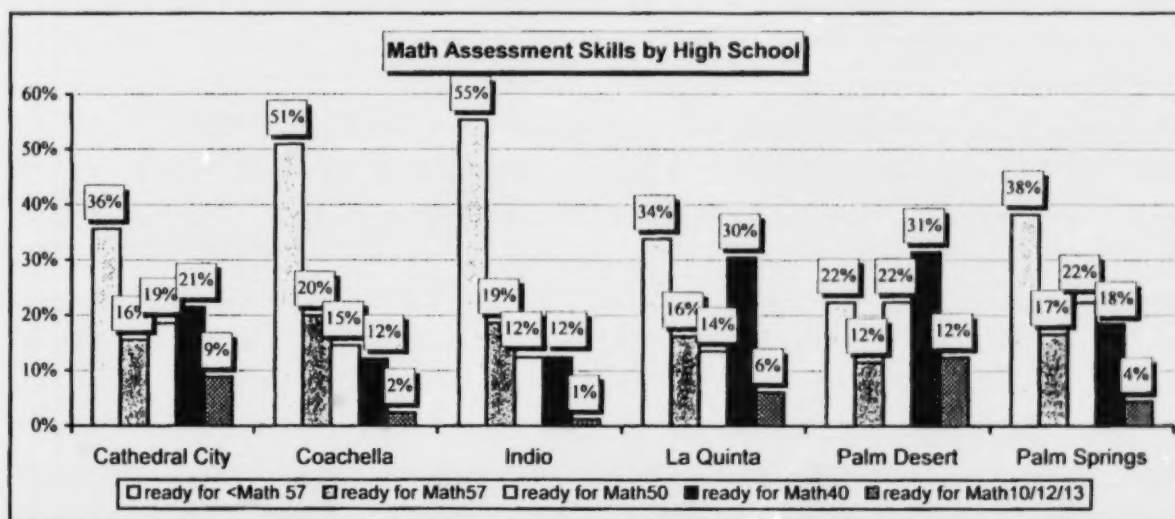
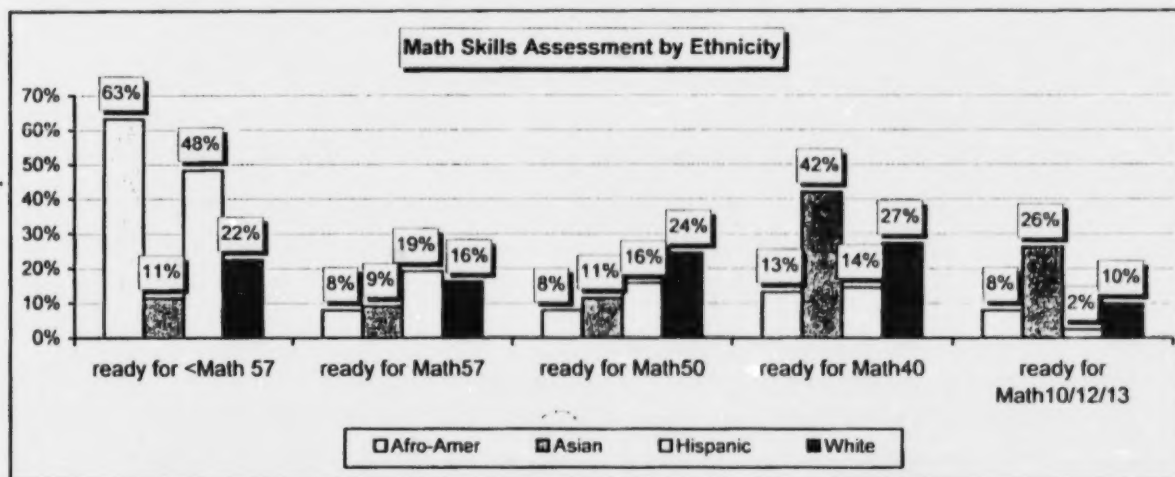
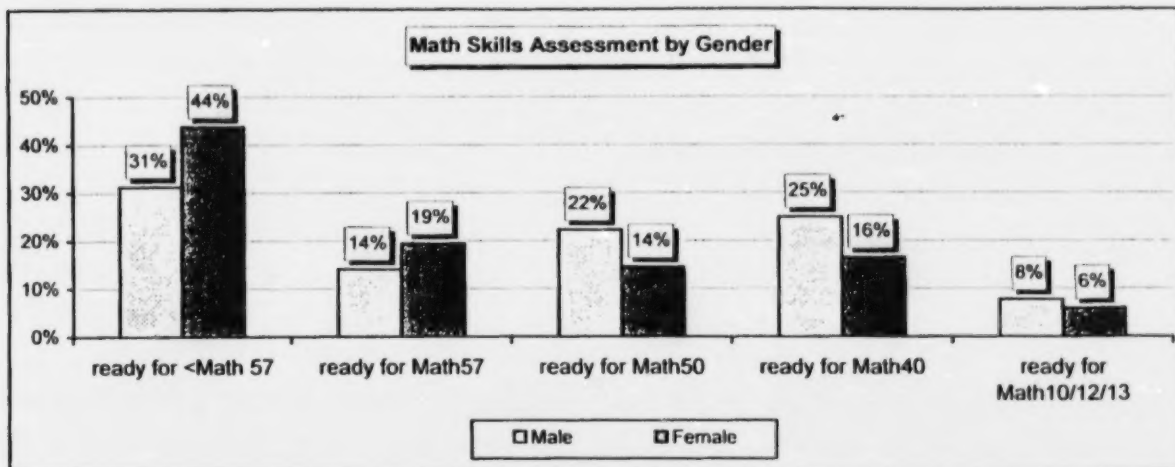
- By Gender
- By Ethnicity
- By High School



MATH SKILLS ASSESSMENT

INCOMING STUDENTS, FALL 2001

- By Gender
- By Ethnicity
- By High School



APPENDICES

- **Assessment Advisement Table**
- **Assessment Test – Sample Questions**

ASSESSMENT and ADVISEMENT

TEST LEVEL	READING	WRITING (Sentence Skills)	ARITHMETIC CPT only	ALGEBRA CPT only	COLLEGE LEVEL MATH
RANGE III	CPT: 85 – 120 RDG 1 (elective)	CPT: 100 – 120 ENG 1A		104 – 120 MATH 10, or MATH 13, or see CLM score	> 91 MATH 1A 86-90 MATH 1A or 12 70-85 MATH 12 63-69 MATH 10 or 12 43-62 MATH 10 or 13 < 43 See Algebra score
RANGE II	CPT: 65 – 84 RDG 51	CPT: 85 – 99 ENG 51 or ESL 51 & 60	66 – 120 MATH 50 or see Algebra score	47 – 103 MATH 40	
RANGE I	CPT: 35 – 64 RDG 50 (RDG 55 is also recommended)	CPT: 45 – 84 ENG 50 & 55 or ESL 50B & ESL 55B	35 – 65 MATH 57	23 – 46 MATH 50 Also see Arithmetic score	
DEVELOP- MENTAL EDUCATION	CPT: 0 – 34 DE courses	CPT: 0 – 44 DE courses	0 – 34 DE courses	0 – 22 See Arithmetic Scores	

Second Language English speakers may need to take a
SLEP test and then see a counselor for interpretation

Information

1. See a Counselor or Advisor prior to registration to ensure appropriate course selection.
2. Students are advised about English courses based on scores in both Reading and Sentence Skills.
3. Other assessment measures considered in Reading, English and Mathematics course selection include: a student's educational record, educational goals, certainty of goals, maturity, motivational factors, study skill/habits, etc.
4. Students are advised to take RDG 50 and ENG 50 concurrently or successfully complete RDG 50 before taking ENG 50.
5. Students scoring at Range II or below are strongly encouraged to take Reading, English and mathematics courses their first semester.
6. English Writing Lab (ENG 97, 98/ESL 97, 98) is recommended for ENG 1A and ENG 51 ESL 51 students.

Course Titles

RDG 1A	Critical Reading
RDG 45	Advanced Vocabulary
RDG 50	Basic Reading
RDG 51	Analytical Reading
RDG 55	Basic Vocabulary
ENG 1A	Composition
ENG 50	Basic Writing Skills
ENG 51	Intro to Expository Writing
ENG 55	Fundamentals of Grammar
ESL 50A,B	Basic Communication Skills
ESL 51	Expository Language Skills
ESL 55A,B	Transitional & Basic Grammar
ESL 60	English Grammar and Structure
RESL 50	ESL Reading
MATH 1A	Calculus
MATH 10	College Algebra
MATH 12	Pre-Calculus Analysis
MATH 13	Liberal Arts Math
MATH 40	Intermediate Algebra
MATH 50	Elementary Algebra
MATH 57	College Arithmetic

ASSESSMENT TEST SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Reading Comprehension

This test is designed to measure how well you are able to understand what you read. It contains 20 questions. Some questions are sentence relationship type, in which you must choose how two sentences are related. Other questions refer to reading passages of various lengths. Some passages are 75 words or less, while others are longer.

Sample questions for Reading Comprehension:

Question 1: (Narrative)

Read the statement or passage and then choose the best answer to the question. Answer the questions on the basis of what is stated or implied in the statement or passage.

Myths are stories, the products of fertile imagination, sometimes simple, often containing profound truths. They are not meant to be taken too literally. Details may sometimes appear childish, but most myths express a culture's most serious beliefs about human beings, eternity, and God.

The Main idea of this passage is that myths

- (a) are created primarily to entertain your children.
- (b) are purposely written for the reader who lacks imagination.
- (c) provide the reader with a means of escape from reality.
- (d) illustrate the values that are considered important to a society.

Question 2: (Sentence Relationships)

Two underlined sentences are followed by a question or statement about them. Read each pair of sentences and then choose the best answer to the questions or the best completion of the statement.

The Midwest is experiencing its worst drought in fifteen years.

Corn and soybean prices are expected to be very high this year.

What does the second sentence do?

- (a) It restates the idea found in the first.
- (b) It states an effect.
- (c) It gives an example.
- (d) It analyzes the statement made in the first.

Sentence Skills

Two kinds of questions are given in this test. Sentence correction questions ask you to choose a word or a phrase to substitute for an underlined portion of a sentence. Construction shift questions ask that sentence be rewritten in a specific way without changing the meaning. A broad variety of topics are included here. You will be presented a total of 20 questions.

Sample questions for Sentence Skills

Question 1: (Sentence Correction)

Select the best version of the underlined part of the sentence. The first choice is the same as the original sentence. If you think the original sentence is best, choose the first answer.

Ms. Rose planning to teach a course in biology next summer.

- (a) planning
- (b) are planning
- (c) with a plan
- (d) plans

Question 2: (Construction Shift)

Rewrite the sentence in your head, following the directions given below. Keep in mind that your new sentence should be well written and should have essentially the same meaning as the sentence given to you.

Being a female jockey, she was often interviewed.

Rewrite, beginning with

She was often interviewed...

The next words will be

- (a) on account of she was
- (b) by her being
- (c) because she was
- (d) being as she was

Mathematics

The CPT has three sections of mathematics: Arithmetic, Elementary Algebra and College Level Math. Everyone begins with the Arithmetic test and progresses through higher levels of difficulty.

Arithmetic Skills

The Arithmetic Skills test measures your abilities in three primary categories. The first is operations with whole numbers and fractions. This includes addition, subtraction, multiplication, division and recognizing equivalent fractions and mixed numbers. The second category involves operations with decimals and percents. Questions include rate, percent and measurement problems; geometry problems and distribution of a quantity into its fractional parts. A total of 17 questions are asked.

Sample questions for Arithmetic Skills

Question 1:

Solve the following problems and choose your answer from the alternatives given.

All of the following are ways to write 20 percent of N EXCEPT

- (a) $0.20 N$
- (b) $20/100 N$
- (c) $1/5 N$
- (d) $20 N$

Question 2:

Which of the following is closer to $\sqrt{10.5}$?

- (a) 3
- (b) 4
- (c) 5
- (d) 8

Question 3:

Three people who work full time are to work together on a project, but their total time on the project is to be equivalent to that of only one person working full time. If one of the people is budgeted for $\frac{1}{2}$ of his time to the project and a second person for $\frac{1}{3}$ of her time, what part of the third worker's time should be budgeted to this project?

- (a) $\frac{1}{3}$
- (b) $\frac{1}{4}$
- (c) $\frac{1}{6}$
- (d) $\frac{1}{8}$

Elementary Algebra

The Elementary Algebra test measures your abilities in three categories. The first, operations with integers and rational numbers include computation with integers and negative rationals, the use of absolute values and ordering. The second category is operations with algebraic expressions. This tests your abilities with the evaluation of simple formulas and expressions, and adding and subtracting monomials and polynomials. Both of these categories include questions multiplying and dividing monomials and polynomials, the evaluation of positive rational roots and exponents, simplifying algebraic fractions and factoring. The third category tests abilities in equation solving, inequalities, and word problems. The questions include solving systems of linear equations, solving quadratic equations by factoring, solving verbal problems presented in algebraic context, geometric reasoning, translating written phrases into algebraic expressions and graphing. A total of 12 questions are presented.

Sample questions for Elementary Algebra Skills

Question 1:

If a number is divided by 4 and then 3 is subtracted, the result is 0. What number is it?

- (a) 12
- (b) 4
- (c) 3
- (d) 2

Question 2:

$$16x - 8 =$$

- (a) $8x$
- (b) $8(2x - x)$
- (c) $8(2x - 1)$
- (d) $8(2x - 8)$

Question 3:

If $x^2 - x - 6 = 0$, then x is

- (a) -2 or 3
- (b) -1 or 6
- (c) 1 or -6
- (d) 2 or 3

College-Level Mathematics

The College-Level Mathematics test assesses proficiency from Intermediate Algebra through Precalculus. Six categories are covered. Algebraic operations include simplifying rational algebraic expression, factoring and expanding polynomials, and manipulating roots and

exponents. The category of solutions of equations and inequalities includes the solution of linear and quadratic equations and inequalities, equation systems and other algebraic equations. Coordinate geometry asks questions about plane geometry, the coordinate plane, straight lines, conics, sets of points in the plane and graphs of algebraic functions. Applications and other algebra topics ask about complex numbers, series and sequences, determinants, permutations and combinations, fractions and word problems. The last category, functions and trigonometry, presents questions about polynomial, algebraic, exponential, logarithmic and trigonometric functions. Twenty questions are asked.

Sample questions for College-Level Mathematics Skills

Question 1:

If $f(x) = x^4 - x + 2$, the $f(-x) =$

- (a) $x^4 - x$
- (b) $x^4 - x + 2$
- (c) $x^4 + x + 2$
- (d) $x^4 + x - 2$

Question 2:

The equation $x^2 + 2ix - 4 = 0$ has as its roots

- (a) $\sqrt{5} - 1, -\sqrt{5} - 1$
- (b) $\sqrt{5} - i, \sqrt{5} + i$
- (c) $\sqrt{3} - i, -\sqrt{5} + i$
- (d) $\sqrt{3} - i, \sqrt{3} + i$
- (e) $\sqrt{3} - i, -\sqrt{3} - i$

Answers to the sample questions.

Reading Comprehension

1) D 2) B

Sentence Skills

1) D 2) C

Arithmetic

1) D 2) A 3) C

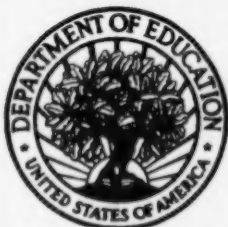
Elementary Algebra

1) A 2) C 3) A

College-Level Mathematics

1) D 2) E

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